

# Gender Affirmation at RMIT

## Guide





# Gender Affirmation at RMIT

## A Guide to Supporting Gender Affirmation

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RMIT University values diversity across our staff and student community and works to provide an environment and culture that is inclusive and respectful.

RMIT recognises that a person's sex and gender may not necessarily be the same. Some people may identify as a different gender to the one assigned at birth, and some people may identify as neither exclusively male nor exclusively female.

'Gender affirmation' refers to the time when a person commences living and behaving as a member of another gender other than their gender or sex assigned at birth. This may also be known as 'gender transition' or 'transitioning' but gender affirmation is the recommended language.

This guide aims to assist our community to better support RMIT staff and students who undertake gender affirmation. The guide provides practical advice on:

- the specific needs of the individual who is choosing to affirm their gender
- issues to consider and actions that may be appropriate
- any support or awareness needed for colleagues or other students

The guide aims to build awareness about a topic that may be new to you or those around you, and to minimise confusion and uncertainty as an individual undergoes their affirmation journey. This guide is for anyone who:

- may be thinking of or are currently affirming their gender, whether socially or medically
- may have supervisory responsibility for a person who is affirming their gender
- may be supporting the well-being of the person who is affirming their gender as they work or study at RMIT
- works within the student or staff support service areas of the University and who may be asked to provide advice and support in light of an individual's gender affirmation

While this guide provides some background information on gender affirmation and the actions that might be appropriate to support a student or staff member, it is very important that the person undergoing gender affirmation drives this process, including the sharing of any information about their gender affirmation. For this reason, it is recommended that a gender affirmation plan be developed in consultation with, and led by, the student or staff member to ensure there are clear actions and responsibilities.

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## Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access at RMIT

RMIT promotes equity and inclusion for LGBTIQ+ staff and students including, but not limited, those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual.

This work is guided by RMIT's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) Framework, which was developed in consultation and partnership with our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) student and staff community members both within RMIT, and within the broader community.

RMIT's LGBTIQ+ Working Group is responsible for guiding and contributing to the implementation of the IDEA Framework, and comprises senior leaders, key stakeholders and those with lived experience, both students and staff.

The Gender Affirmation guide is intended to help address the needs and issues that arise when a person affirms genders whilst working or studying at RMIT. It provides practical advice referring to:

- the specific needs of the individual who is choosing to affirm their gender
- the reasonable needs of the workplace and changes to systems
- any support or awareness needed for colleagues or other students around behavioural expectations.

We encourage you to read this guide and discuss its application further with your staff member or student, or alternatively, your manager/student support officer, to fully understand each other's roles and responsibilities during gender affirmation.

## About gender affirmation

Not all people are comfortable with their gender that was assigned at birth. Gender affirmation refers to the period of time where a person commences living and identifying as a member of another gender, other than their gender or sex assigned at birth. This is also referred to as a person *affirming their gender* because the person is living and behaving as their personally experienced sense of gender (i.e. their gender identity). For people affirming their gender, having their gender identity recognised at work or whilst studying at university is an integral part of living as their affirmed gender.

Gender affirmation is the process that many, but not all, individuals undergo in order to live more authentically in regard to their gender identity. It is a unique journey for each person. Gender affirmation may involve 'social transition', such as changing outward appearance, clothing, mannerisms, and name. It may also involve a 'medical transition', to align an individual's body with their gender identity, and this may involve sex reassignment surgery and/or hormone replacement therapy.

Many trans people will consider that they have affirmed their gender when they can live publicly in their authentic gender identity, while others may not feel the process is complete until medical affirmation has occurred. An individual's gender affirmation can be a challenging and exciting journey, whilst for others it may be difficult and anxiety-provoking.

Gender affirmation may involve a social transition, medical transition and/or a legal transition.

RMIT also recognises that a person does not need to affirm their gender to identify as transgender. Individuals may choose to affirm their gender socially but not medically; or they may choose to change their name and pronouns but not change their outward appearance. Each decision is valid, and the individual should do what feels right for them.

Whilst many choose to affirm their gender to the 'opposite' gender, RMIT acknowledges that one's gender identity can continually evolve through the course of the person's life and some people may choose to identify as non-binary, where their gender is in-between, fluctuating or beyond the binary of 'man' and 'woman'.

**Social transition:** coming out, changing pronouns, changing name, changing outward appearance

**Medical transition:** hormone replacement therapy, gender affirmation surgery or other medical procedures

**Legal transition:** changing name and gender on systems and documents

To learn more about gender affirmation, see [5.9 External Resources and References](#)

## Terminology

RMIT has adopted the following terminology throughout this guide in relation to sexuality and gender identity. We acknowledge that it is difficult to reach a clear consensus as to the definition of the various terms used. In order to provide terminology that is consistent and most broadly agreed upon, RMIT has borrowed definitions from respected Australian sources, including *Pride in Diversity*, *The Australian Human Rights Commission*, and the *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender*.

This guide is based heavily on Curtin University's Trans Guide and we thank and acknowledge them for their work.

**AFAB/PFAB** (Assigned female at birth/Presumed female at birth.) **AMAB/PMAB** (Assigned male at birth/Presumed male at birth.) The gender one is presumed at birth is what the doctor says you are when they see you after being born. We use this term rather than "assigned at birth" or similar terms because those genders are a presumption made about everyone, even if many of those people grow up to have that gender fit them just fine.

**Cisgender** or **cis** is a person whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Coming out** is a term referred to the process of LGBTIQ+ individuals telling others about their gender identity or sexual identity. This process continues and is not often a one-off experience.

**Deadname** is a term used by some trans people to describe the name they were given and known by prior to affirming their gender and/or coming out.

### Gender

Gender is part of a person's social and personal identity. It refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual identity, and the way a person presents and is recognised within the community. A person's gender refers to outward social markers, including their name, pronouns, outward appearance, mannerisms and dress. A person's sex and gender may not necessarily be the same. An individual's gender may or may not correspond with the sex or gender assigned at birth or confirm to the gender binary.

**Gender Affirmation** is the personal process or processes a trans or gender diverse person determines is right for them in order to live as their defined gender and so that society recognises this. Gender affirmation may involve social, medical and/or legal steps that affirm a person's gender. Affirming our gender doesn't mean changing gender, 'having a sex change' or 'becoming a man or a woman', and transition isn't the same as being trans. A trans or gender diverse person

who hasn't medically or legally affirmed their gender is no less the man, woman or non-binary person they've always been.

**Gender binary** refers to a social construct that assumes someone can only be male or female, excluding the existence of many individuals who identify with a gender outside of this binary.

**Gender identity** refers to a person's deeply held internal and individual sense of gender.

**Gender dysphoria** refers to the discomfort or distress around gendered physical characteristics or words, such as pronouns and names which do not reflect one's gender identity.

**Gender expression** refers to the external appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behaviour, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviours and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

**Intersex** Intersex people are born with naturally occurring and very normal differences of chromosomes, gonads (ovaries and testes), hormones, and/or genitals. There are more than 40 different ways to be intersex. People may find out they are intersex at many different points including when they are born, during puberty, when trying to conceive a pregnancy, by random chance, and some people never find out.

**Misgendering** the act of referring to someone by words or language that is not affirming for them, such as using a former name or pronoun, or making assumptions about their appearance.

**Non-binary gender** is an umbrella term for any number of gender identities that sit within, outside of, across or between the spectrum of the male and female binary. A non-binary person might identify as gender fluid, trans masculine, trans feminine, agender, bigender etc

**Sex characteristics** refers to physical parts of the body that are related to body development/regulation and reproductive systems. Primary sex characteristics are gonads, chromosomes, genitals and hormones. Secondary sex characteristics emerge at puberty and can include the development of breast tissue, voice pitch, facial and pubic hair etc. The term 'sex characteristics' is more accurate than 'biological sex', 'biologically male' or 'biologically female'. Physical organs and chromosomes should not be gendered as male or female, the gendering of body parts is a significant source of stigma, discrimination and pathologisation.

**Student Support Officer** is used throughout this document to refer to this point of contact (irrespective of their job title). Whilst staff will need to speak with their manager about a gender affirmation plan, students have multiple points of contact where their options may be discussed. These include counselling staff, lecturers, tutors, RMIT Connect, Student Rights Officers, Community Safety, or staff from the Wellbeing team.

**Transgender, Trans and Gender Diverse** are inclusive umbrella terms that describe people whose gender is different to what was presumed for them at birth. Trans people may position 'being trans' as a history or experience, rather than an identity, and consider their gender identity as simply being female, male or a non-binary identity. Some trans people connect strongly with their trans experience, whereas others do not. Processes of gender affirmation may or may not be part of a trans or gender diverse person's life.

**Transexual or transvestite** are outdated, and offensive terms previously used to refer to transgender people. Transexual is an older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions, including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries. Unlike trans, transexual is not an umbrella term. Many trans people do not identify as transexual and prefer the word trans. It is best to ask which term a person prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective: transexual woman or transexual man.

## Affirming genders while at RMIT

### Key principles

A person has the right to live and behave according to their gender identity, gender expression, or intersex status, including being addressed by the name and pronoun that corresponds to their identity. Aside from being courteous and respectful, this is also a legal obligation under the Federal and State anti-discrimination legislation that applies to RMIT. This means that:

- RMIT staff and students may request to have their University employment/student record amended to reflect a change in given name, title or gender
- Individuals who request a change to their name, title or gender on RMIT's systems will be recognised by their indicated name and pronouns, and be treated with the same professional courtesy as shown to others
- Unintentional mistakes using the incorrect pronoun or name may be made by others from time to time, however, the intentional and persistent refusal to respect an individual's gender identity is not in line with RMIT's values. RMIT's complaint mechanisms may be invoked to address an individual's concerns
- Individuals will be able to access campus facilities and participate in gender-based activities according to their gender identity, or intersex status.

A person's right to privacy is to be respected throughout the gender affirmation process. This means that:

- Individuals should not be asked to give a reason why a requested record change is needed or to disclose private information relating to their gender affirmation
- RMIT may require proof of identity to verify/confirm the person's change of identity against recorded information for legal name changes, however evidence of gender affirmation surgery or treatment is never a requirement
- Information that the person affirming their gender has disclosed will be treated as confidential. With their permission, information they are comfortable to share with colleagues and peers will be disclosed. If their disclosed information needs to be given to others, they will be informed of this beforehand or it will be identified in the gender affirmation plan.

### General considerations

#### Developing a gender affirmation plan (staff and students)

There are many factors to consider when affirming gender at work or in a study environment. As well as the emotional support factors, there are systems considerations, such as changing an email account name or gender on business or student systems. To address these factors, the individual who is affirming their gender may choose whether to enter a formal plan for gender affirmation. A gender affirmation plan sets out clearly the actions agreed upon by both the person who is affirming their gender, and their manager/student support officer as relates to their work or study at RMIT. It also includes any obligations to be met by the manager/student support officer on behalf of the University and the individual.

In the absence of a gender affirmation plan, some managers/student support officers may be unsure as to what assistance the staff member/student is seeking, or the expectations of the staff member/student may not be fully realised, and important administrative process timelines may be missed. Some gender affirmation planning options available to the individual who is affirming their gender are listed below.

The plan could include:

- the expected date (if known) when gender affirmation will occur, as notified by the individual who is affirming their gender expression, name, and pronoun.



- the information that will be given to other members in the team/class/study group.
- the RMIT records that will need to be changed and the expected timeframe for this change to be actioned.

Please see the *Template for a Gender Affirmation Plan*. The gender affirmation plan can also address these other issues that need to be considered during gender affirmation:

## Taking a leave of absence (staff and students)

Some people may not require a leave of absence, however:

- Staff members are entitled to access special leave in addition to annual and personal leave entitlements for appointments or recovery periods associated with their gender affirmation process. For more information, refer to the [Personal Leave Instructions](#). Staff are entitled to access up to 30 days special leave through the course of their employment in addition to annual and personal leave entitlements, for appointments or recovery periods associated with the gender affirmation process. This leave may be taken consecutively, single or part days (as agreed between the employer and the employee), and with reasonable notice provided to the employee's manager. This may include but is not limited to:
  - A medical appointment for hormone replacement therapy and/or associated prescriptions;
  - Medical procedures as part of their gender affirmation process;
  - Medical appointments to receive a medical certificate, to be used for the legal change of gender process;
  - Other appointments related to the gender affirmation process (such as therapy and/or counselling appointments); and
  - Recovery periods following medical procedures, hormone replacement therapy or other related appointments.
- To process Gender Affirmation leave in Workday, employees need to submit a service request to People Connect, who may request supporting documents where applicable. People Connect will enter the leave into Workday on behalf of the employee and assist with any inquiries related to the procedure.
- Students are entitled to apply to defer their initial enrolment or take a leave of absence from their studies. For more information, refer to [Applying for a leave of absence](#).

## Academic extension (students)

If you are unable to meet the set due dates for submitting assignments due to your personal circumstance impacting your studies, you may request a short extension (up to seven days) by completing and submitting an [Application for extension of time for submission of assessable work form](#). The form must be submitted to your lecturer at least one working day before the set due date. [See more information about this process here](#).

## Special consideration (students)

If unexpected circumstance affect your ability to complete an assessment (including attending an exam) you can apply for special consideration - if approved you may be granted an assessment adjustment.

To support your application based on medical or mental health grounds, we recommend that you include an [impact assessment statement \(PDF 41kn 1p\)](#) completed by your treating professional.

In most cases you can apply online, [find out more information here](#) and to speak to someone about the application process contact Student Support at RMIT Connect.



## Equitable learning services (students)

Equitable Learning Services (ELS) are dedicated to providing equal opportunities for all. Registering with ELS allows for necessary and reasonable adjustments to be made to study conditions. Within the LGBTQIA+ community there is a history of Neurodivergence as well as mental health issues, for this reason we have included information about ELS. Gender Affirmation alone is not supported by the ELS department.

[Find out more about this service and how to register here.](#)

## Financial support (students)

If you are experiencing unexpected financial difficulty, which is affecting your ability to study, you may be eligible for the RMIT Student Hardship Assistance. Hardship assistance can be used for urgent, short-term needs. This funding is provided only where you can demonstrate that one-off assistance will support your studies and that your current financial circumstances are not typical.

[Find out how to apply here.](#) If you would like to speak with someone about this process contact Student Support at RMIT Connect.

## Counselling (staff and students)

For students, RMIT provides professional counselling on each campus and are available if you want to talk about personal, study, mental health and wellbeing concerns. You do not need to be in a crisis or dealing with a serious problem to go to counselling. The counselling service is free for all currently enrolled students, including students on approved Leave of Absence and Open University Australia (OUA) students enrolled in a degree program with RMIT. You can make an appointment to see a counsellor online. [Find out more about this service here.](#)

For staff, the university recognises that choosing to affirm your gender can affect your work, safety and quality of life. RMIT is committed to helping you address such problems in order to enhance your safety, productivity and general well-being. RMIT has selected Counselling Appraisal Consultants (CAC), an independent body, to administer the counselling service. The program maintains total confidentiality and your privacy. [Find out more about the Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\) here](#) (staff login required).

## Use of campus facilities

Staff and students are entitled to access the facilities that best correspond to their gender identity. This means that people who identify as male must be allowed to use the men's facilities and people who identify as female must be allowed to use the women's facilities. Facilities include any locker rooms (including RMIT bike hubs), toilets, etc. If there is a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of reason, they may be provided access to a single stall toilet or a gender neutral facility when available. Any expectation that staff/students without a disability regularly use disabled toilets is not appropriate. Any expectation that a trans person will use a different facility is also inappropriate. RMIT continues to upgrade its facilities to include more gender neutral toilets. Information about their location can be found here: [All Gender Toilets](#)

## Verification or change of University records

RMIT is required to take reasonable steps to ensure personal information in their records is accurate. If a request to change recorded details is made, the change should be verified by evidence to ensure a link between the individual's former identity and their new identity. Where RMIT needs to verify a person's identity, or match records, the evidence required is noted below.

**Preferred name:** a person's preferred name may be their legally given name or a name by which they choose to be known. A request to amend your preferred name can be made to [RMIT Connect](#)

(students) at any time. Staff can make these changes via WorkDay. Verification of identity is not required, nor is any rationale for the change. This change will not result in any change to your given name in the existing University record.

**Given name and Family name:** a request to amend your given name can be made to [RMIT Connect](#) (students) at any time. Staff can make these changes via WorkDay, information about required documents can be found here: [My Details](#). To be able to amend the existing record, the University will need to link the change of existing record to the new record and you will be asked to provide proof of identity. The system change will only be made after the required evidence has been sighted by Human Resources or RMIT Connect personnel. Any one of the following is sufficient evidence:

- a certificate of marriage issued by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- a change of name certificate which authorises the use of your new name issued by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

The same process applies for change to family name.

**Title:** a request to amend your mode of address (title such as Mr, Mrs, Ms, Mx) can be made to [RMIT Connect](#) (students) at any time. Staff can make these changes via WorkDay, information about required documents can be found here: [My Details](#). A title conferred by way of degree/award/honour is only amended by Human Resources or RMIT Connect upon request in accordance with University policy.

**Gender:** RMIT University systems allow you to identify as M (male), F (female) or X (Other) in accordance with the Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender. A request to amend gender information can be made to [RMIT Connect](#) (students) at any time. Staff can make these changes via WorkDay, information about required documents can be found here: [My Details](#). Amendment to gender information on your University record does not require any evidence.

**New identification card:** Once you have changed your name in RMIT systems, you may wish to obtain a new identification card, this request can be made to [RMIT Connect](#) (students) and [RMIT Building and Facilities Access](#) (staff).

## If you affirm your gender

### Inform yourself of RMIT processes to support your gender affirmation process

Think about the issues and obligations that may impact on your employment or studies at RMIT. Understanding some of these beforehand will enhance any discussion with your manager/student support officer. While this guide identifies and addresses some of those issues, there will always be others you can better relate to. Refer to the Checklist at the end of this guide to help you plan your journey.

Consider the gender affirmation planning recommended in this guide to see if it meets your needs. Additional matters can be discussed and included in your plan to ensure everyone has a common understanding of what is expected.

### Seek support and guidance

RMIT offers staff and students support and guidance as they affirm their gender, including non-binary genders. All staff and students at RMIT can expect to receive the levels of support articulated in this guide throughout their gender affirmation whilst at the University.

Your manager/student support officer can offer primary support through the gender affirmation process. Staff and students can expect to be supported through the process to a level that they are comfortable with as discussed with their manager/student support officer. RMIT understands this may be a difficult conversation for both or either of you. You can consider bringing a friend or colleague for support or using the sample email if helpful to initiate a conversation about affirming genders.

Your manager/student support officer may not be experienced or highly knowledgeable in the area of gender affirmation and may need some time to get to understand your needs and concerns. They can also seek advice through the support and professional services available in order to better support and guide you.

Disclose information which is necessary to ensure you are supported at RMIT during your gender affirmation process as early as you feel comfortable. This provides an opportunity for the manager/student support officer to ask questions about how they can best support you in the workplace/classroom.

RMIT has professional service memberships which can assist in the process of affirming genders. Staff and students can contact [Pride in Diversity](#) for advice and assistance.

### Is the University meeting its obligations?

RMIT University has obligations toward staff and students who gender affirmation whilst working or studying at RMIT. The University's guidance on developing a gender affirmation plan can assist in ensuring all of these obligations will be met over the gender affirmation period. For example, while a change to given name or gender may flow to other records held at RMIT, noting the required change in a gender affirmation plan (especially for a 'preferred name' change) can help ensure all records are identified and notified to the relevant system owners who can then be requested to update their records.

If developing a gender affirmation plan is too formal for you, or not useful, it is still helpful for you to inform the University of any amendments to employment and study records as an outcome of gender affirmation-related changes. Individuals who affirm their gender whilst at RMIT will need to inform their manager/student support officer of when they wish their gender identity to be recognised and seek to amend their University records. To learn more about how records can be changed, refer to [Update my Personal Details](#).

Managers/student support officers will work with you to inform colleagues of your preferred name and pronouns and their obligation to respectfully accommodate this change. Individuals need to note that their colleagues may be unfamiliar with the concept of gender affirmation and may unintentionally make mistakes with pronoun or name use. However, deliberate and continued mistakes should be brought up with your manager/student support officer and handled through the complaint mechanisms of the University.

### Discrimination and harassment

The University is committed to provide a safe, respectful study and workplace and this means one that is free from discrimination and harassment. RMIT encourages reporting of behaviour that is harmful and disrespectful so it can be addressed to ensure RMIT is a safe and respectful work and study environment for all members of the community. Breaches of the Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Policy may result in disciplinary action under the [Student conduct policy](#) or the staff [Code of conduct](#).

**Students:** if you or anyone you know is feeling unsafe or unsure of what to do about threatening or unwanted behaviour, you can contact [Safer Community](#) via email [saferrcommunity@rmit.edu.au](mailto:saferrcommunity@rmit.edu.au) or



call the team on 03 9925 2396. Email and phone messages are checked daily from Monday to Friday.

**Staff:** if you are feeling unsafe, are looking for support or if you would like to make a complaint, you can contact People Connect on 9925 8000 or [people.connect@rmit.edu.au](mailto:people.connect@rmit.edu.au). For more information on making complaints at RMIT, see the [Staff guide to reporting complaints](#).

Safer Community and People Connect are not an emergency services, if you or others feel at risk or consider the situation to be an emergency, call the Police or an ambulance on 000. If you are on campus, alert Campus Safety and Security on 03 9925 3333.

## If a staff member in your team or a student you support is affirming their gender

### Tips from Charles Sturt University

1. Think of the person as being the gender that they have told you they are and treat them accordingly.
2. Use the name and pronoun that the person advises. If you are not sure, respectfully ask. If you make a mistake correct yourself, apologise and move on – don't make a big deal about it.
3. When writing about a transgender person, do not belittle their identity by putting their preferred name or pronoun in quotes or italics.
4. Treat the person with same level of respect and dignity you would accord any other staff member or student and that you would expect for yourself.
5. Respect boundaries. Do not ask intrusive or intimate personal questions that you wouldn't ask another person or wouldn't want others to ask of you (for example about their body, relationships, sex-life, or any medical intervention). If you feel it is appropriate to ask a personal question, check first if it is okay to do so.
6. Do not assume that the person should automatically be willing to discuss transgender related issues with you, or expect them to be an authority on such topics – do your own research if you want to know more: [5.3 External Resources and References](#)
7. Respect privacy. Do not tell others about a person's trans status. Generally, when a person affirms their gender, they describe themselves in terms of their affirmed gender (e.g. as a man or as a woman), not as a transgender person. Some people may prefer other gender descriptions.
8. Understand that the person is entitled to use the facilities appropriate to their affirmed gender (such as bathrooms and change rooms), both during and after gender affirmation.
9. Do not condone or participate in gossip, jokes, flippant remarks, or sexual innuendos about the person or their trans status – be active in confronting or naming comments or behaviours that are transphobic. The University expects staff and students to treat each other with dignity and respect and will not tolerate discrimination or harassment because of gender identity.
10. Do not make assumptions about the person's sexual orientation or personal relationships. Gender affirmation is about a person's core sense of their gender, not their sexual identity. The sexuality of transgender people can cover the full human spectrum – they may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual, pansexual, asexual, fluid, or they may use another term or choose not to label their sexuality.
11. When a person has affirmed their gender, appreciate that, while their gender may be different, their basic character and personality hasn't changed – in most other respects they are still the same person as before.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Sturt University [https://cdn.csu.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0004/3380935/Supporting-gender-affirmation-at-Charles-Sturt.doc](https://cdn.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0004/3380935/Supporting-gender-affirmation-at-Charles-Sturt.doc)

## Inform yourself of RMIT processes to support gender affirmation

Not all managers/student support officers will feel comfortable or certain of how they can assist staff/students through the gender affirmation process. If approached, be honest, open and respectful, remembering that the staff member/student is also likely to be feeling vulnerable. Be sensitive to the situation and ask questions that will allow them to explain and discuss their needs.

It is important that you consider the key issues and obligations that may impact on your staff member/student's employment or studies at RMIT. You should consider:

- How you can support the person through the process, be it in the workplace/classroom, or whilst on practicums/work experience/secondment.
- How you can support their colleagues.
- What arrangements you will need to put in place/approve to support the gender affirmation process.
- What your expectations are, the expectations of the person who is affirming their gender and those of your team/class. How these expectations can be met to facilitate a successful gender affirmation process.

You should review the suggested gender affirmation plan in preparation of discussion with your staff member/student should they decide they wish to enter a formal plan. You can also access support from [Pride in Diversity](#) for specialist advice and guidance on supporting staff or students through gender affirmation.

## Provide support and guidance

RMIT offers staff and students support and guidance as they affirm their gender. For external advice, guidance and support they can call on [Pride in Diversity](#) for expert assistance. All staff and students at RMIT can expect to receive the levels of support articulated in this guide throughout their gender affirmation whilst at the University. As a manager/student support officer, you may be asked to provide the required support and guidance.

You are encouraged to seek further information to educate yourself and your team/class about gender affirmation. For staff you can access training via Learning in WorkDay, there is currently [LGBTIQA+ 101](#), a self-directed online module that takes roughly 30 minutes and [LGBTIQA+ Inclusive Best Practice](#) a 90 minutes facilitated workshop that reviews basic concepts and terminology, covers inclusive best practice, and work through scenarios to help you build your confidence as an ally to the LGBTIQA+ community or contact to request a separate session.

You should work with the individual to inform their colleagues of their preferred name and pronouns and remind everyone of their obligation to respectfully accommodate this change.

While many people will be supportive of a colleague in gender affirmation, others may be uncomfortable with the concept of gender affirmation. It is helpful to remind staff and students that diversity in the workplace or classroom offers opportunity to work and learn with others who bring different perspectives.

All staff/students are required to treat an individual with respect and behave in accordance with RMIT's values; they are not required to believe or accept the other person's beliefs. Referral to the professional or support services may be appropriate for staff/students who are having difficulty with dealing with the concept of gender affirmation.

Heads of school and academics may wish to be proactive and encourage presentation of the topic of inclusion, diversity, equity and access in introductory lectures, reminding students of RMIT's equity policies and their responsibilities under the student code of conduct. Managers and team leaders can hold briefing sessions or organise appropriate training for their staff teams.

If a staff/student's gender affirmation process is impacting their work or studies, you may consider referring them to [Student Connect](#) and [Student Counselling](#) for student advice and, or the

[Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) and the IDEA People Team by emailing [diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au) for staff advice.

## Seek your own support and guidance

If you are a primary support person to the staff/student choosing to affirm their gender, you may also require guidance and support. You can approach your line manager or consider seeking support and guidance from [Pride in Diversity](#) or others charged with assisting in the process of gender affirmation. The IDEA People team can also support and provide guidance and can be contacted by emailing [diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au).

You are not to disclose any information about the individual affirming their gender without their express permission, other than on a business needs-to-know basis, in which case they should be informed beforehand. You must always obtain permission.

Note: You should ensure that your local records are accurate and consider if certain data capture is needed/relevant. For example, do you necessarily need to capture gender data? If unsure, contact relevant professional services to confirm.

## Support and Guidance

The following professional and support areas at RMIT University can be contacted by managers/student support officers, staff and students affirming their gender, their colleagues and co-students. Please respect the privacy of others if you are using these networks and professional services for your own support or enquiry, ensuring permission is sought from the staff/student who is affirming their gender before revealing any identifying information.

## Who to contact on campus

### Emotional support and advice for students affirming their gender

Contact RMIT Connect, Student Counselling, or the RUSU Queer Collective for support.

Student Connect – [Wellbeing and support](#)

Student Counselling – [Services and appointment booking](#)

RUSU Queer Collective – [Facebook Page](#), [Website](#), or [rusu.queer@rmit.edu.au](mailto:rusu.queer@rmit.edu.au)

### Support and advice for student support officers and teaching or student support staff

You can contact the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access team within the Students Group or the People team.

IDEA Students Group team - [inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:inclusion@rmit.edu.au)

IDEA People Team – [diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au)

### Emotional support and advice for trans staff

Contact the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) or People Connect for support and advice. [people.connect@rmit.edu.au](mailto:people.connect@rmit.edu.au)

General EAP - 1300 687 327 (Australia) or email [eap@convergeintl.com.au](mailto:eap@convergeintl.com.au). Use the code RMITEDUTY when booking online.

LGBTIQA+ specialist helpline - 1300 542 874

HR Assist - +61 3 9925 8000 or

### Emergency and crisis support

Contacts for [emergency and crisis situations](#), including mental health crisis support.

### Support and advice for managers of trans staff



Contact HR Assist, your HR Business Partner or Manager Assist.

People Connect - +61 3 9925 8000, or  
Manager Assist – [Information and Services](#)

## Ally Network

A RMIT Ally is someone (staff or student) who is informed about, is sensitive toward and understanding of LGBTIQ+ people and affirms the experience and human rights of LGBTIQ+ people.

Students Group IDEA Team - [inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:inclusion@rmit.edu.au)

People Group IDEA Team – [diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au)

## LGBTIQ+ Viva Engage staff network

The LGBTIQ+ network is for RMIT staff who identify within the LGBTIQ+ community. Staff are able to connect with colleagues, forming a social network. To join, [request access to RMIT LGBTIQ+ Staff Network](#)

## RMIT University's Student Union (RUSU)

RUSU offers support for students through various groups. the student union wellbeing officers at [Compass](#), support with [Student Rights](#), or the [RUSU Queer Department](#).

RUSU has officers on all RMIT campuses. Visit their website for locations:  
<http://www.rusu.rmit.edu.au/contact>

Website - <http://www.rusu.rmit.edu.au/>

Phone - + 61 3 9925 1842

Post - PO Box 12387 Franklin St, Melbourne, Victoria 3006

## RUSU Queer Lounges

Safe spaces on all three Victorian campuses for LGBTIQ+ students to hang out and access LGBTIQ+ themed resources, books and DVDs.

Website - <https://www.rusu.rmit.edu.au/queer>

City Campus – Building 5, Level 1, Room 17

Bundoora Campus – Building 202, Level 2, Room 24

Brunswick Campus – Building 515, Level 1, Room 12

## People Connect

Advice and assistance with changes to employment records, directories, and staff cards, entitlements under leave provisions in the enterprise agreement, accessing Employee Assistance Program.

People Connect – +61 3 9925 8000 or

## RMIT Connect

Advice and assistance with changes to student records and student cards, and rules for deferment and taking a break from studies.

List of contact options – [Student Connect](#)

## Who to contact off campus

### QLife

Telephone counselling, information & referral line available 5.30pm to 10.30pm, 7 days a week

Free Call 1800 184 527

Website (and online chat) – <http://www qlife.org.au/>

### Transgender Victoria

TGV consults with the trans and gender diverse (TGD) community to understand the issues that matter and impact their lives.

Website - <http://www.transgendervictoria.com/what-we-do/what-we-do>

### Minus18

This is Australia's largest youth led organisation for gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans youth.

Website - <https://www.minus18.org.au/>

Email - [info@minus18.org.au](mailto:info@minus18.org.au)

Address - Minus18, 19a William St, Cremorne VIC, Australia, 3121

Social Media - [Facebook /minus18youth](#)

[Instagram @minus18youth](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Twitter @minus18youth](#)

[YouTube minus18tv](#)

### Rainbow Health

Rainbow Health Australia is a program that supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) health and wellbeing through research and knowledge translation, training, resources, policy advice and service accreditation through the Rainbow Tick.

Website - <https://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/>

Email - [rainbowhealthaus@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:rainbowhealthaus@latrobe.edu.au)

Phone - (03) 9479 8700

### Equinox Gender Diverse Health Centre

Equinox is a peer led Trans and Gender Diverse (binary and non-binary) Health Service operated by the Thorne Harbour Health, (THH)

Website: <https://equinox.org.au/>

### Thorne Harbour Health

LGBTIQ+ community-controlled organisation, governed by our members, and working for our sex, sexuality and gender diverse communities.

Website: <https://thorneharbour.org/>

## External Resources and References

1. Australian Human Rights Commission

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-and-intersex-equality>

2. Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender

<http://www.ag.gov.au/Publications/Pages/AustralianGovernmentGuidelinesontheRecognitionofSexandGender.aspx>

3. Advocates for Youth

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/>

4. National LGBTI Health Alliance

<http://lgbtihealth.org.au/>

## 5. Pride in Diversity

<http://www.prideindiversity.com.au/>

## 6. World Professional Association for Transgender Health

<http://www.wpath.org/>

## Acknowledgements

In developing these guidelines, RMIT has looked to best practice at other organisations, and in addition to the recommended resources above also acknowledges the information made available publicly on the following sites:

1. Curtin University <https://www.curtin.edu.au/students/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/curtin-gender-transition-guide-compressed.pdf>

2. Charles Sturt University

[https://cdn.csu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0004/3380935/Supporting-gender-affirmation-at-Charles-Sturt.doc](https://cdn.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0004/3380935/Supporting-gender-affirmation-at-Charles-Sturt.doc)

3. Trans Hub <https://www.transhub.org.au/language>

4. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

<https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/resources/transgender-people-at-work-guideline/>

## Appendix

### Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission – Developing a Transition Plan

<https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/resources/transgender-people-at-work-guideline/>

### Affirmation Plan

Link to download word document:

[https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/static/b4b7c2a42494315532d5fca38a4ee8ef/Resource-Guidelines-Transgender\\_people\\_at\\_work\\_Transition\\_plan.doc](https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/static/b4b7c2a42494315532d5fca38a4ee8ef/Resource-Guidelines-Transgender_people_at_work_Transition_plan.doc)

This Affirmation Plan (“the Plan”) sets out the actions agreed between \_\_\_\_\_ (“the Staff/Student”) and \_\_\_\_\_ (“the Manager/Student Support officer”) regarding the Staff/Student’s gender affirmation journey.

#### TIMELINE

The Staff/Student has notified the Manager/Student Support officer that they will be affirming their gender on or about \_\_\_\_\_ (“the Affirming Date”). This date has been discussed between the Staff/Student and the Manager/Student Support officer prior to the Plan being finalised. The date is identified to inform the timing of any required actions under this Plan.

#### ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT



The Manager/Student Support officer and the Staff/Student are aware of the support and guidance available in relation to the gender affirmation. <https://www.rmit.edu.au/students/support-services/lgbtiq/gender-affirmation>

The Manager/Student Support officer will respect the Staff/Student's right to privacy when seeking guidance and support and will request permission from the Staff/Student for any disclosure of their private information on a business needs-to-know basis.

### APPROPRIATE FORMS OF ADDRESS

The Staff/Student will be known by the name of \_\_\_\_\_ as of \_\_\_\_\_ . The proper pronouns to use will be \_\_\_\_\_ .

### CHANGES TO UNIVERSITY RECORDS

The Staff/Student is responsible for requesting any changes of given name, title and gender within University records as follows:

- Employment – updated via Workday, information about required documents can be found here: [My details](#)
- Student enrolment – contact [RMIT Connect](#)
- Email accounts – contact [Service Connect](#) or [RMIT Connect](#)

The Staff/Student will include with their request Affirming date and any evidence required by the University to show changes to given name, title and gender. Information for staff can be found here: [My details](#) and for student here: [Gender Affirmation at RMIT](#)

The Staff/Student will ensure any request for change is received by the University at least 5 working days prior to the Affirming Date to allow for processing of the request.

In relation to any record change:

- Records of previous name or gender will be maintained where required by law or by RMIT's record keeping policies.
- If the University is unable to make the required change to any record held it will notify the Employee/Student of additional actions required (e.g. update of Working With Children Checks).

The Staff/Student will notify their Manager/Student Support officer of any request they have made for a change to University records and directories.

### DRESS STANDARDS

Staff and students who identify as trans, gender diverse, non-binary or another gender identity are free to dress in a manner that affirms their gender identity. RMIT does not have a formal dress code and supports our community to dress in attire that makes them comfortable, while allowing them to the successfully engage with their work and/or studies. For any questions related to appropriate dress at work, for staff contact People Connect on 9925 8000 or [people.connect@rmit.edu.au](mailto:people.connect@rmit.edu.au). and for student you can contact [Student Connect](#) or [inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:inclusion@rmit.edu.au)

### FACILITIES USAGE

In recognition that an individual is allowed to access the facilities that best correspond to their gender identity, the following arrangements will be put in place as of the Transition Date for usage of campus facilities such as toilets, the Gym, and the Bike Hub (*specify arrangements below*):

- Bathrooms/Toilets/Locker Rooms
- Other Gender-Specific Spaces, if any

### MAINTAINING STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The expected standards of conduct are those in line with RMIT's values and signature behaviours and policies and procedures supportive of anti-discrimination laws. While actively communicating the importance of using the correct names and pronouns, the Staff/Student and the Manager/Student Support officer acknowledge that it can take people sometime to learn to use correct names and pronouns. If a person uses the incorrect name or pronouns correct them.

If a person persists to use the incorrect name or pronouns, the Staff/Student will advise their Manager/Student Support Officer will first address the issue broadly with the team, and failing this measure, will address any further complaint directly in accordance with the University's complaint mechanisms.

**COMMUNICATIONS WITH OTHER STAFF, CLIENTS AND STUDENTS** This is to be decided between the person affirming their gender and their Manager/Student Support Officer. If you require assistance with this, you can contact for staff [diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:diversity.inclusion@rmit.edu.au) and for students [inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:inclusion@rmit.edu.au)

### COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Any concerns or complaints made about gender affirmation, including those about the Staff/Student, may be referred through the University's complaints portal for appropriate dealing with the matter.

### PLAN STATUS AND CONTINUANCE

This Affirmation plan will be upheld by the Staff/Student and the Manager/Student Support officer. Where corrective action is required, the Staff/Student and the Manager/Student Support officer will meet to discuss the required corrective action and any agreed amendments will be noted in a variation to the plan.

If the Staff/Student is notified that they will be reassigned to another Manager/Student Support officer or campus location, permanently or temporarily, the Staff/Student and the Manager will meet to discuss the required actions to ensure the continuance of the plan.

### AMENDMENT OF PLAN

If the Staff/Student or the Manager/Student Support officer identifies a need to change the Affirmation plan, they will meet to discuss the requested change and the evidence supporting the need for the change. Agreed amendments will be incorporated into a variation of the plan. The Staff/Student has the right to pursue a complaint where no agreement is reached on requested changes to the plan.

### ENDING DATE

This plan will terminate one year from the Affirming Date, unless otherwise agreed between the Staff/Student and the Manager/Student Support officer.

## Checklist

### SUPPORT

- Informed manager/student support officer (primary support person) of decision to affirm your gender?
- Met with line manager/student support officer to discuss affirming needs and any impact on employment/studies?
- Contacted professional and support services for additional guidance and support?

### Affirmation TIMELINE

- Decided on need for formal Affirmation plan?
- Discussed details of Affirmation plan with manager/student support officer?

- Affirmation date
- Timeframe for any medical affirming
- Facilities usage arrangements
- Change of University records
- Advice to colleagues/team members
- Identified records needed to be changed?
  - HR employment / Student admission record
  - Payroll (and banking details)
  - Personnel files
  - Staff / Student Card
  - University website pages
  - Email
  - Finance system records
  - Research systems records
  - Memberships
- Identified evidence required for name, title, gender change?
- Submitted request and supporting evidence for name, title, gender change?

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- Discussed need for any extended absences or work/study adjustments?
- Discussed work/study deadlines or extensions?
- Discussed return to work / return to study arrangements?
- Applied for deferral/leave of absence?

### COMMUNICATIONS

- Decided on communication approach?
- Bottom-up or top-down announcement? Do you mention your gender affirmation slowly to a few key people, or do you do an announcement to the whole team.
- What tone to use? Casual or more formal to reflect an important professional business announcement?
- Mitigating resistance? What's the best way to support any education for some team members?
- Message source? Who should make the announcement? Staff/Student, Manager/Student Support officer, Director of Area/Head of School?
- Message channel? Make the announcement in person or by email with some adjustment time?
- Informed colleagues/students of gender affirmation?
- Informed colleagues/students of preferred/chosen name, title, pronoun?

## Sample emails: Initiating conversations about gender affirmation

The timing of sending of any communications to other staff/students is important. Please discuss beforehand with your manager/student support officer or a member of the professional and support areas.

### SAMPLE 1

Dear (Manager/Student Support officer),

I would like to come and talk with you regarding a personal matter that will require your support and understanding as well as some changes (at work/to my study environment). You may not be aware that I am transgender and affirming my gender over the coming period to (outline aspects of decision).

I would like to initiate this discussion so as to arrive at a plan of action to have my gender identity recognised (at work/whilst studying at university). RMIT's *Gender Affirmation Guide* has been a useful guide for me and I am hoping we can meet to discuss some of the issues raised in the guide that will need to be addressed.

I understand this could be an unfamiliar concept for you and I am open to sharing with you what this journey means to me. I want to assure you that my gender affirmation will not affect my (studies/ability to do my job). I will send through a meeting request shortly / Could you please let me know a suitable time to meet. I would prefer this meeting to be held (outline preference)

Kind regards,

## SAMPLE 2

Dear .....

There is some important news that I need to tell you. Your (AREA) colleague (NAME) is undergoing gender affirmation and is now known as (PREFERRED NAME) with the pronouns (preferred pronouns). Some of you may have already been told the news by (NAME), and they have now asked that I inform every one of their gender affirmation.

I believe (NAME's) decision to share this journey with us is an important one and I know the supportive collegial environment fostered in (AREA) will continue for all team members. I understand that this could be an unfamiliar concept for many of you, so please contact me or our [EAP](#) if you have any questions or would like further information.

Here are some tips from my experience in supporting (NAME) on this journey to date:

- Allow yourself time and space to adjust your mindset
- Be conscious about using their previous name or pronouns; you might make a mistake, if so apologise and move on.
- If you have questions, please take some time to do some research before simply asking (NAME)
- Be respectful of their journey and continue to support them as a colleague
- Remember (NAME's) gender affirmation is not your information to share without prior permission.

I'm also including some links that may further your understanding of gender-transition, and of the highly supportive stance that RMIT University holds towards diversity in the workplace.

Kind regards,

## Clarification of discrimination types and applicable legislation

RMIT promotes equity and inclusion for LGBTIQ+ staff and students including, but not limited, those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual in line with our core values, and our legislative and policy obligations.

This work is guided by RMIT's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) Framework, which was developed in consultation and partnership with our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) student and staff community members both within RMIT, and within the broader community.

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT 2010

Under Victorian legislation, RMIT must avoid direct and indirect discrimination towards people on the basis of their gender identity, sex, and/or lawful sexual activity. Direct discrimination "occurs if a person treats, or proposes to treat, a person with an attribute unfavourably because of that



attribute”, and indirect discrimination “occurs if a person imposes, or proposes to impose, a requirement, condition or practice— (a) that has, or is likely to have, the effect of disadvantaging persons with an attribute; and (b) that is not reasonable” (Equal Opportunity Act 2010, pp. 20 – 21, 2011). A person who believes they have experienced unlawful discrimination or harassment at RMIT may make a complaint to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

### **SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT 1984**

The Federal *Sex Discrimination Act* makes it unlawful to directly or indirectly discriminate against an individual based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. The Act allows individuals to make complaints to the Australian Human Rights Commission if they believe they have been the subject of discrimination. Further information is available at <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/complaints/make-complaint>

### **COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT**

In addition to these external complaints avenues, the University has procedures for the resolution of complaints of discrimination and harassment. Staff in supervisory and academic positions are expected to use the procedures in taking all reasonable and appropriate steps to eliminate discrimination from the University environment.

You can find RMIT's Complaints processes, policies and procedures here:

<https://www.rmit.edu.au/staff/service-connect/compliance-process/complaints>

### **RECOGNITION OF SEX AND GENDER (FEDERAL GUIDELINES)**

In 2013, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* was amended to introduce new protections from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in many areas of public life.

These legal protections are complemented by the Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender, which commenced in July 2013. The guidelines recognise that individuals may identify as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth, or may not identify as exclusively male or female, and that this should be reflected in records held by the government. The guidelines also standardise the evidence required for a person to change their sex/gender in personal records held by Australian Government departments and agencies.

- [Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender \[PDF 1.64MB\]](#)
- [Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender \[DOCX 1.65MB\]](#)

The guidelines apply to all Australian Government departments and agencies that maintain personal records (including employee records), and/or collect sex and/or gender information.

### **Top ten tips to being an effective rainbow ally.**

RMIT has a guide to being an effective rainbow Ally, and this is a great start point for yourself education on inclusion and respect for the Transgender community. [Top Ten Tips to being an effective Rainbow Ally: Trans and Gender Diverse Edition](#)

# Equity and Inclusion, Students Group

We thank RMIT staff, students, and external organisations and contacts for their help in developing this resource.

For feedback or to get in touch, please email us at: [inclusion@rmit.edu.au](mailto:inclusion@rmit.edu.au)